

S E R M O N

LAMBETH CHAPEL

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PREACHED IN

LAMBETH CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH II, 1787.

ST. JOHN'S

THE LANCET

LAMBERT'S CHAPLAIN

ON 22ND MARCH 1881

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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN
LAMBETH CHAPEL,
AT THE
CONSECRATION
OF THE

RIGHT REV. GEORGE PRETYMAN, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,
ON SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 1787.

BY
WILLIAM PEARCE, D.D.
PUBLIC ORATOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
AND MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

LAMBERTH CHAPEL

AT THE

CONGREGATIONAL

OF THE

RIGHT REV. GEORGE LESTERMAN D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. MARTIN'S

ON SUNDAY MARCH 11. 1877

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WILLIAM VERNON D.D.

PROVINCIAL ARCHDEACON

OF THE TANGLE



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE ARCHDEACON

L O N D O N

PRINTED BY W. GOSWELL

FOR THE CATHOLIC IN THE STANDARD

W. GOSWELL

S E R M O N, &c.

I CORINTHIANS, XI. 1.

BE YE FOLLOWERS OF ME, EVEN AS I ALSO AM OF
CHRIST.

IF we compare the dispensation of Moses with that of Christ, we shall immediately perceive a difference of stile and manner, in the laws both of morality, and of ecclesiastical government. In the one, the duties towards God and our neighbour, are described with the utmost minuteness: the several vices and crimes are not only prohibited, but defined: and the merit and demerit of particular actions, in many cases, ascertained by a great variety of rewards and punishments. In the other, every thing relating to morality, is simple, comprehensive, and general: the formality even of a *precept* is studiously avoided; “*Blessed* are the merciful, *blest* are the pure in heart.”

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Or if a precept is admitted, it is either thrown into a metaphor, the opposite to the language of strict law, as "Let your *light* so *shine* before men," or expressed in such a manner that we are led by the most obvious reasons to recur to the spirit of it, and reject the letter; "If thy right hand offend thee, *cut it off*, and cast it from thee." The strict observation of the precept is sometimes even impossible; a model is held out for our virtue to imitate, which no human abilities can ever reach, or even our imagination fully conceive, "Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your *Father which is in heaven*, is perfect." Every possible method seems to have been adopted by our Saviour, to draw off our attention from technical rules, to larger views, and more rational consideration. The Mosaic law was intended for the infancy, Christianity for the manhood of the world.

The same difference is more observable still in regard to *ecclesiastical government*. In the Old Testament, the High Priest, Priests and Levites; their birth, and rank; their privileges, their duties, and their discipline, are fixed with the most scrupulous exactness. No discretion is allowed even in the vestments of the priests, or in the utensils of the Tabernacle. In the New, our Lord simply *called* his disciples, and they left all and followed him. The only positive ceremonies he instituted or retained, were Baptism and the Lord's Supper: nor are there any precepts, except
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in relation to these two institutions, either of Christ himself or his apostles, which are expressly enjoined us for the perpetual regulation of the visible Church.

How then, it may be asked, are Christians to form their ideas of ecclesiastical establishments? The answer may be drawn from the foregoing observations, and from the words of St. Paul in the text, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*: that is, where positive precepts fail us, we are left to regulate the Christian visible church in the same manner as our private christian lives; partly by *imitating* the conduct of Christ and his apostles, and partly, by applying our own *reason*; the exercise of which, as we have already seen, the whole tenor of the Gospel requires of us as a duty.

We have an instance of the application of both these rules; supported by the highest authority, in the earliest times of Christianity. Our Lord had left no orders behind him, so far as we learn, to continue the succession of the twelve apostles. On the death however of Judas Iscariot, the remaining eleven^a thought themselves bound to fill up their number, and their conduct in the election of Matthias was justified soon after by the sanction of the Holy Ghost^b. *Example* in this instance co-operated with *reason*. By following his steps, the apostles best shewed their

^a Acts i. 23.

^b Acts ii. 1.

their affection for their Master's memory, and the original reason of the number, the reference to the twelve tribes of Israel^e, was still subsisting. But the instance does not end here; it shews still farther, that even the *example* is not binding, where the *reasons* of it have ceased. For before the death of any other apostle^f, the Gospel was opened to all nations^g; the reason of any reference to the twelve tribes of Israel ceased—and with it, ceased the practice of filling up the number of the twelve apostles^h.

Let us consider then, what we are to learn, in regard to the government of the Visible Church, from the conduct of Christ, and his apostles.

Our Saviour himself appointed twelve apostles, and seventy disciples. From hence we derive authority, for an *established ministry*, and for *subordination* in that ministry.—The apostles *left all*, and followed him: our Lord praised their conduct, and promised to compensate it an hundred fold. Hence, an order of men *set apart from worldly business*, and *devoted to the service of religion*, may be justified by one of the first of our Saviour's acts.

It

^e Mat. xix. 28.

^f Acts xii. 2.

^g Acts x. 34—48.

^h St. Paul indeed calls himself an Apostle, and there was a vacancy by the death of James. But it was not till some time after the death of St. James (Vid. Acts xiii. 1.) that St. Paul assumed the title: and he derived it from higher authority than from any act of the eleven. He calls himself “An apostle, not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.” Gal. i. 1.

It is in vain to argue, that the apostles and disciples were endued with miraculous powers, and can therefore have no successors now in their ministry. In their miraculous powers we cannot follow them: but we may, and are taught to follow their faith, their diligence, their patience, and their other virtues. And the original *reasons* of such an establishment remain still, and will remain, whilst ignorance remains to be instructed, or vice to be reformed. The particular mode indeed in which the seventy were subordinate to the twelve, no where appears; nor could it be expected, when they were all under the immediate authority of Christ himself. But their general subordination may be deduced, not only from the more frequent and more private instructions communicated to the apostles, but from the first institution of the Lord's Supper, at which the Apostles alone, and none of the seventy were present.

A distinction is observable even amongst the apostles themselves. Our Lord, on many occasions, selected Peter, and James, and John, to be entrusted with sublimer information^g, to be witnesses of grander miracles^h, and companions of more distressful scenesⁱ: and there is no slight ground to believe, that the superiority (its extent I do not examine) which they derived from the confidence reposed

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in

^g At the transfiguration, Mark ix. 2.
daughter, Mark v. 37.
xiv. 33.

^h The restoring of Jairus's
ⁱ The agony in the garden, Matt. xxvi, 37. Mark

in them, was afterwards acknowledged by the rest of the disciples *.

An objection may be raised however to any subordination amongst the apostles, from the answer of our Saviour to the mother of Zebedee's children, who desired that her sons might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on the left in his Father's kingdom. "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, but it *shall not be so amongst you*." The answer to this objection may be drawn both from the occasion of our Saviour's remark, and from the words that follow. The occasion called for a rebuke to *ambition*. The remark therefore is directed not against *pre-eminence*, but against the *ardor of aspiring to it*. The words that follow, not only confirm this, but teach us still farther, that if the argument extends to an *equality amongst the apostles*, it extends also to an *equality of the disciples with their Lord*. "It shall not be so amongst you, but whosoever will be great amongst you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief amongst you, let him be your servant: even as the *Son of Man* came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many^m." The words themselves even point out subordination, and imply that amongst the apostles,

* This James died early, Acts xii. 2. but concerning Peter and John, to whom is added the other James, see Gal. ii. 9. ^l Matt. xx. 25. ^m Matt. xx. 28.

apostles, there should be *greatest*, and there should be *chief*. They were *discouraged* indeed from aiming at pre-eminence, but they were *instructed* how to deserve it.

Such then is the authority, which we have from Christ himself, first, for an established ministry; next for a ministry set apart from worldly business; and lastly, for a subordination in its several ranks. If we consider the general simplicity, the extent and comprehension of Christ's doctrines; that they were intended to regulate the infancy as well as all progressive ages of the Church; were destined to coalesce with all forms of government, to unite all nations in one holy band, we shall no longer wonder, that the principles of church government were not laid down by our Saviour with greater precision.

After such an example it would be needless to trace minutely the same conduct in the Apostles. What our Lord had begun, they carried into effect, and illustrated by their practice. It will be more to our purpose to enquire, whether they introduced any *new* regulations, which it may be the duty of after ages to follow.

An instance of this kind occurs very early in the election of Matthias ^a. On that occasion, the disciples *assembled* and *prayed*, and there is all the appearance of great solemnity.

^a Acts i. 15—26.

solemnity. The same practice was continued in the election of the seven Deacons, with the addition of the laying on of hands*. St. Paul, Timothy, and Titus, seem to have copied the example in all their ordinations*.—Our Lord himself used no *ceremonies* in the appointment of his disciples. The simplicity with which he *called* them was suited to the dignity of his character, and had something in it of the sublimity of a divine command. He said to Matthew, "Follow me," and "he arose and followed him." But when the choice of the ministry devolved to the apostles, who, though inspired, were inferior to their Lord, the *reason* of the former simplicity ceased, and the *reason* of *ceremonies* began immediately to operate. Instead of serving the purposes, as is sometimes said, of vanity and pride, ceremonies were in reality marks of *inferiority*. They were *useful* to the apostles on such an occasion, in testifying the caution and deliberateness of their choice, in notifying it to the church, in impressing on themselves and others the awfulness of the ministerial charge, and above all, in giving them an occasion of imploring, with greater solemnity, the blessing of God on so serious and holy an institution. If these reasons might have weighed on the minds of the apostles, their force must be still greater, since inspiration has been withdrawn.

If

* Acts vi. 6.

* 1 Tim. iv. 14. and v. 22. Titus i. 5.

If the apostles thought themselves justified in deviating from the example of Christ, where the reason of copying it had ceased; we shall not wonder, if on the same account, in the appointment of the several orders of the ministry, they varied from one another. In the infancy of the Church, the orders were fewer; and all received their commission from the *whole body of the apostles*. As the number of believers and the duties of the ministry increased, new ranks were added, adapted to the exigencies of the Church: and Timothy and Titus not only derived their authority from a *single apostle*, but were themselves empowered *singly* to ordain "Elders in every city."

I will not enquire at present, whether the reasons of the former species of ordination have ceased, or not. I shall only observe, that if any church defends itself either by the *smallness of its community*, or by the *republican form of its civil government*, in adhering to the example of the earlier apostles, our Church is justified both by its *greater extent*, and its *monarchical principles*, in following that of St. Paul. Nor have the *reasons* of the several orders, instituted by St. Paul, and retained by our Church, lost any thing of their original force. As long as the people shall continue to want instruction, the *reason* of the appointment of *Priests*, answering to St. Paul's *Elders*, will still subsist: as long as any preparation or trial shall

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be

¹ Acts xi. 6.

² Acts xiii. 1.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 14. and 2 Tim. i. 6.

⁴ 1 Tim. v. 22. Tit. i. 5.

be necessary for so holy and arduous an office as that of Elder, there will be *reason* for the order of *Deacons*: and as long as both these ranks shall require any previous examination into their learning, their morals, or their faith; or shall want any encouragement to the discharge of their duty, or censures for their neglect of it, so long will the *reasons* remain for an order corresponding to that of Timothy and Titus.

The Scriptures indeed are silent concerning the future appointment of the higher orders. They nowhere intimate who were to succeed the apostles, or who were to appoint successors to Timothy or Titus. But this silence extends no farther than to the *manner of appointment*, and not to the existence or necessity of such orders: and all that can be inferred from it is, a conclusion highly important to our own Church, that we have permission and authority for that *mode of appointment*, which in the opinion of the legislature has been thought wisest and best.

The difference between the higher orders in the primitive times, and those in our own, consists solely in the support, which the former derived from inspiration. Our Church pretends not to be infallible, nor to give the same security, as the apostles did, for fidelity or wisdom. This can only be compensated in part, by the caution and discernment of those who appoint, and by the industry of those who are appointed in being "Followers of the apostle, even

even as he also was of Christ." The text is applicable to our private lives, as well as to the forms of ecclesiastical government. The purity of St. Paul's principles, his diligence, his courage, and his zeal, his moderation and patience, his faith and hope, are qualities which may be, and sometimes have been, imitated in later times. These indeed are duties in which the whole body of the people, as well as the clergy, are bound to follow him. But the force of his reasoning, the depth of his penetration, and above all, his knowledge of the Divine will, can be but faintly copied by any human abilities. Yet these are the parts of St. Paul's character, which it is the more immediate province of the governors of the Church to imitate; a province which requires all the efforts of human skill, and all the aids of human learning.

It would ill become me, to point out the duties of the higher orders, though to do this, would be but to alledge other reasons still for the existence and utility of the orders themselves. It is sufficient for the defence of our Church, on the present occasion, to have proved, that in the distinction of its ranks, and in the solemnity of this day, its conduct is justified by the authority of St. Paul.

In conclusion; to copy the example of Christ and his Apostles, is to copy the spirit of their institutions, as well as the forms. This method we are instructed to adopt in explaining the written precepts of Christ's morality; and the

the reason is stronger for its application to church government, in which we have little else but example for our guide. Reason and Conscience, to which the gospel every where appeals, are less liable to dispute than technical rules, or forms of government. Hence the *morality* of the gospel is simple and uniform throughout all the Christian world. The same uniformity is not to be expected in *church establishments*, because the *reasons* may vary on which they are founded. But were all churches regulated on the two principles of *sound reason*, and *apostolical example*, the differences between them, being accounted for, and justified, would no longer be objects, to excite animosity. The violence of sects, and the prejudice of party would yield to the genuine temper and spirit of Christianity: and our minds would bear the same characters, as the gospel, which we profess, those of simplicity, candour, and moderation; and at the same time, of consistency, firmness, and dignity.

F I N I S.

